

**Title of Thesis:**

Jimmy Chi: Hybridity and Healing

**Thesis statement:**

That Jimmy Chi's work offers a social healing process through the creative envisioning of 'a gentler society' (Chi 1996: 3), where complex personal identities and histories are embraced and celebrated.

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**Candidate's Certification:**

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis



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A thesis submitted for the degree of  
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of the University of New England.

## **Acknowledgements**

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the Broome region, namely the Yawuru and Djugun, Baad, Jawi, Nimanburu, Nyul Nyul, Jabirr Jabirr, Karajarri and Nyangumarta peoples.

As a woman of Scottish and Cornish descent, living on the north coast of eastern New South Wales, I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the Coffs Harbour area, the Gumbaynggirr nation.

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## **Abstract**

### **Title of Work:       *Jimmy Chi: Hybridity and Healing***

This thesis examines the notion that Jimmy Chi's two musical plays, *Bran Nue Dae* (1990) and *Corrugation Road* (1996) offer new ways of thinking about Indigenous identities.

The works are discussed in terms of the physical context in which they were created, namely the Dampier Peninsula in the Kimberley region of north Western Australia, and the historical events which occurred in that area during the process of invasion and colonisation. They are also placed within the development of Indigenous Theatre in Australia, against a framework of post-colonial theory.

My research methodology included immersion in the cross-cultural Kimberley culture by living and working there for two years, as well as re-enacting the journeys undertaken in the two plays. I also conducted many formal and informal interviews with the creators of the works, including Jimmy Chi, Stephen Pigram, Michael Manolis and Stephen 'Baamba' Albert.

The backbone of this project is the detailed contextual annotation of the two plays, using information gained from the interviews, primary sources and from anecdotal evidence from other Broome locals. This material is then compared to the critical literature.

My conclusion is that Jimmy Chi's work offers a departure from previous models of Indigenous theatre, including the 'documentary realism' school. Jimmy Chi's appropriation of the musical form and road trip genre paved the way for younger artists to experiment with form and structure, and to move on from representation of Indigenous characters as powerless victims.

Jimmy Chi himself stresses the importance of the songs to the productions, and it is true that the songs cover an extraordinary range of styles, subjects and even philosophies.

Jimmy Chi's envisioning of 'a gentler society', outlined in his song 'Streets of Your City' (1996), accords with the great post-colonial theorist Edward Said's contention that 'There is the possibility of a more generous and pluralistic vision of the world' (Said 1993: 277, in Gandhi 1998: 124).

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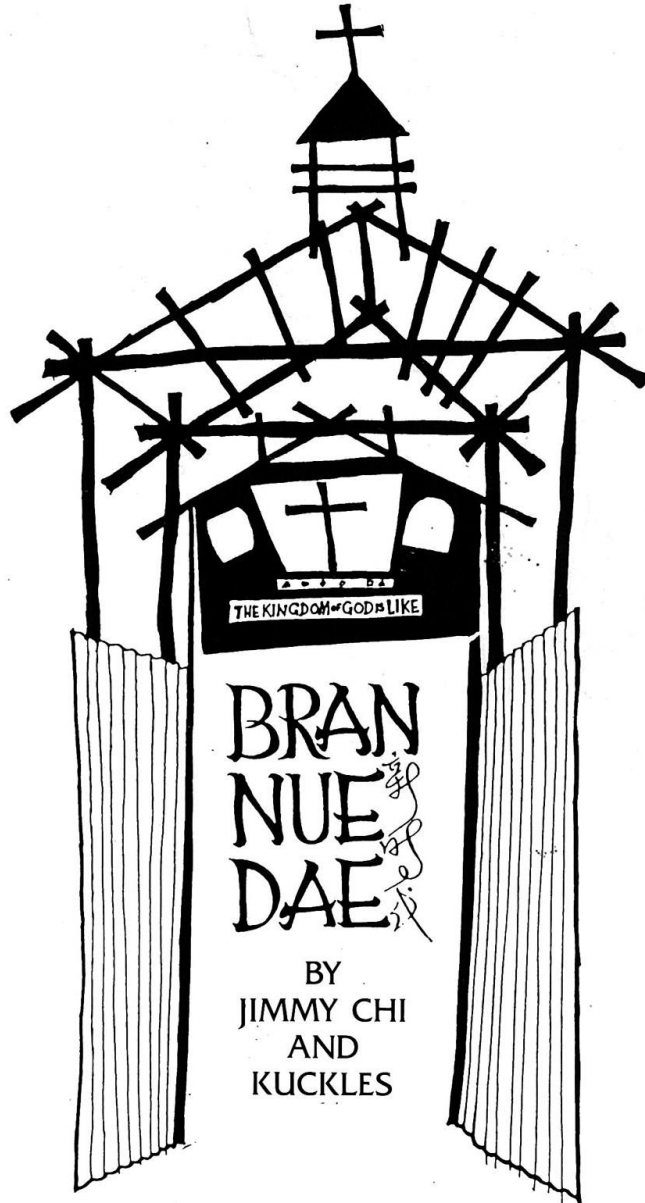
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FESTIVAL OF PERTH  
1990  
THE MYER FESTIVAL

BRAN NUE  
DAE  
PRODUCTIONS

THE WESTERN  
AUSTRALIAN  
THEATRE  
COMPANY



BRAN NUE DAE